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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003653

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SUBJECT: NINEWA: PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT NOW INTERESTED IN AN
"AWAKENING"; KURDISH AGENDA APPEARS TO BE AT WORK

REF: BAGHDAD 3293

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader Jason Hyland: 1.4 (B) and (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

Summary

1. (C/REL USA, ACGU) Khasro Goran, Ninewa's powerful Vice Governor, provincial head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and provincial chief of the Article 140 committee, told PRT Leader October 24 that the Ninewa Provincial Government planned to work with Sheik Fawaz al Jarba to conduct an "awakening" that would take elements from the Anbar awakening, but be tailored to the province's multi-ethnic, multi-sect conditions. The first point of business for the awakening would be to "fix the port of entry at Rabiya" (on the Iraq-Syria border in western Ninewa). Despite previously telling the PRT that al Jarba was not a "real Sheik" and could not be trusted, Goran now said that he could be trusted and would be able to stand up to the other leaders in the area to "clean up Rabiya." Goran stressed the importance of the awakening working under the existing institutions in Ninewa and including members from all ethnic groups, not just Sunni Sheiks. However, the Kurdish agenda clearly appears to be at work, and the proposal could prove destabilizing for the delicate balance between Kurdish and Sunni Arab interests in the province.

Awakening for Ninewa?

2. (C/REL USA, ACGU) Khasro Goran told PRT leader October 24 that an Anbar-style awakening could work in Ninewa if done correctly. He said that there were three lessons that could be learned and used from the Anbar awakening: people knew who were causing problems in their own neighborhoods, media support was necessary for success in anti-terror operations, and money was needed to provide an incentive to young people to join the awakening and not cooperate with the insurgents. Goran described the idea as more of a "neighborhood watch" where young people would be armed to do "bone-breaking" fighting against the insurgents in their own neighborhoods. The Vice Governor said that with such local groups engaged in the struggle, the security situation could be quickly improved. Goran stressed that an awakening in Ninewa would need to include people from all ethnic, religious, and sectarian groups in order to be successful. The Vice Governor did, however, specifically exclude the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), whose leader here has a lot of political credibility in the Sunni Arab community and beyond. Goran emphasized that the awakening would work under current institutions, controlled by the Governor, in order to avoid

creating a parallel system to the existing provincial government.

Rabiyah is the First Priority

¶3. (C/REL USA, ACGU) Goran told PRT leader that the Port of Entry at Rabiyah (on the Syria-Iraq border) would be the first priority for the awakening. He stressed that the current leadership in the area was wanted on an arrest warrant for corruption by the Commission on Public Integrity, including the chief of police and leader Sheik Abdullah. (Note: Goran and Governor Kashmoula had stressed in the past that Sheik Abdullah was the only legitimate leader in the area, and that any other Sheik who tried an awakening, specifically Fawaz al Jarba, would not be successful or legitimate. End note.) Rabiyah, Goran claimed, was a hotbed of terrorist activities, and needed to be "completely cleaned out." The Provincial Government would take action against the current situation in Rabiyah, and planned to use the awakening to do so.

Al-Jarba is the Man for the Job

¶4. (C/REL USA, ACGU) Goran stated that Fawaz al Jarba was the right man to work with on an awakening in Ninewa. Al Jarba was meeting with Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki on October 25 to discuss the logistics needs of an awakening, and would come back and work with the government to create an awakening, he said. Goran said that when he first met al Jarba, he did not agree with his position; but once al Jarba said he wanted to work under the authority of the Governor, Goran changed his mind.

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Comment

¶5. (C/REL USA, ACGU) Goran agreed with the PRT leader that he needed to work closely with the Brigade Combat Team commander on such a proposal, and to be inclusive of other groups. The fact, however, that he specifically sought to exclude the Iraqi Islamic Party from such an open discussion, and never mentioned Sheik Abdullah -- one of the most powerful sheiks in the Rabiyah area -- hints at the complex internal politics at work in such an initiative. Rabiyah's location between two disputed areas in the Article 140 process, along with the issuance of arrest warrants on corruption charges by the Commission on Public Integrity for the traditional leaders of the area call into question the motivations of the provincial leadership in working with al Jarba for an awakening in Ninewa.

¶6. (C/REL USA, ACGU) (Comment continued) Rabiyah is key to the Kurds for two reasons. First, the Port of Entry there is a huge cash cow because of the business, both legal and illegal, conducted through there. Second, Rabiyah is the linchpin of a majority Sunni Arab region of Ninewa that is wedged between two largely Kurdish dominated areas. For political and strategic reasons -- all connected with Article 140 maneuvers -- the Kurds will likely seek to extend their influence there. However, such an awakening could have serious consequences for a majority Sunni Arab (Shammar Tribe) area that is not currently disputed in the Article 140 process but that would benefit Kurds if it becomes part of the Kurdish Regional Government in the future. Also, even though Goran's proposal calls for al Jarba's awakening to operate under the watch of the provincial government, it still empowers a layer of armed, mid-level leaders who may demand a piece of provincial power once they deliver the security they currently promise. The bottom line is that the proposal could prove destabilizing for the delicate balance between Kurdish and Sunni Arab interests here. At the same time, since the proposal appears to offer incentives for

minority groups in the province -- especially Christians and Yezidis -- as well as to select Sunni Arabs, its appeal extends beyond the Kurds. The PRT will continue to work closely with our military colleagues to follow developments on this crucial issue.

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